



World Library and Information Congress: 70th IFLA General Conference and Council

22-27 August 2004
Buenos Aires, Argentina

Programme: <http://www.ifla.org/IV/ifla70/prog04.htm>

Code Number: 167-E
Meeting: 113. Library Services for Multicultural Populations with Latin America and the Caribbean
Simultaneous Interpretation: -

Creating a Library Plan for the *Sámi* in Sweden

Peter Sarri

Sami Parliament, Jokkmokk, Sweden

The work of researching and implementing a library plan for the Sámi in Sweden is now complete. The whole process began as early as August 1994, when the Swedish Sámi Parliament's Executive Council determined that the office of the Sámi Library Consultant was to be moved from the Central Lending Library for Upper Norrland Province [*län*] at the City Library of Umeå to the Sámi Parliament. Then, in February of 1995, a full plenary meeting of the Sámi Parliament determined that the office of Sámi Consultant was to be located in Jokkmokk, and that the Executive Council **“should investigate the feasibility of establishing a Sámi central library regarding financing, areas of responsibility, location, etc.”**

My position as Sámi Library Consultant was inaugurated in March of 1996. At first, the main order of business was to get the program going, as far as information services and project activity were concerned. The following year, it was decided to move the Sámi depository library from Umeå to Jokkmokk as well, under the administration of the Library Consultant.

Then, in November 1998 the Sámi Parliament's Executive Council resolved that the Library Consultant should work with the Sámi Cultural Council to **“investigate the feasibility of establishing a Sámi central library regarding financing, areas of responsibility, location, etc.”**

The Sámi Cultural Council on October 20th 1999 requested that the Library Consultant together with the department submit a memorandum concerning the investigation into a Sámi Central Library and Library Plan for the Sámi in Sweden. My office submitted the memorandum entitled **“White Paper: A Sámi Central Library/Library Plan for the Sámi in Sweden”** to the Cultural Council in March 2000, with a proposal for a commission, timeline and budget for the investigation. The proposal was to complete the

investigation in 12 months, to appoint a project director for the study, that the Library consultant was to be responsible for the study, that we engage an advisory group of 10 leaders of various relevant institutions, and that 540,000 Swedish kronor be set aside for the study. The Sámi Cultural Council accepted the White Paper on March 21st 2000. The Executive Council determined in June 2000 that Sámi Parliamentarian Börje Allas would be appointed to lead the investigation into the question of a Sámi Library Plan, with the Library Consultant as secretary of the study group. The Commission was required to submit its proposals within 12 months.

The year 2001 saw a new Sámi Parliamentary election and a new Executive Council elected by the plenary meeting of the Parliament in December 2001. The new Executive Council resolved the following January that

A mandate be made to the Sámi Library Consultant to investigate the question of a Sámi Library Plan for Sweden and that the study should:

- **Investigate the need for a Sámi Central Library and a general plan for Sámi library development in Sweden**
- **Make an inventory of library resources related to the Sámi that already exist in Sweden, the mandates of these institutions, and how a Sámi library plan could function together with the existing library infrastructure in Sweden**
- **Make an inventory of the existing library plans and library resources within the Sámi area outside of Sweden and propose possible forms of collaboration**
- **Investigate the best ways of reaching out to the Sámi population with library services, as far as locations for libraries, bookmobiles and applications of new information technology are concerned**
- **To present a report with a proposal for a Library Plan and proposals for locations and funding**

The commission is to be considered legally binding so long as funding can be arranged for the investigation.

The Library Consultant submitted an application for funding to the Swedish Cultural Council, and was awarded 200,000 Swedish kronor. The Sámi Cultural Council added 50,000 Swedish kronor and the Sámi Parliament's Executive Council set aside 50,000 Swedish kronor from its budget.

In April 2001, the Library Consultant appointed an advisory group consisting of representatives from the Swedish Cultural Council, the Royal Library (the Swedish National Library), the university libraries of Luleå and Umeå, the library of Mid-Sweden University College, as well as representatives from the 4 most northerly provincial libraries: Norrbotten, Västerbotten, Jämtland and Västernorrland. The head librarian of the Norwegian Sámi Parliament had a standing invitation to participate in the meetings of the advisory group. The first of these meetings were held in April 2001 in Umeå to draw up the guidelines for the study. At the following meeting in Karasjok (Kárášjoga) in Norway, it became clear that the Library Consultant could not work alone on this investigation, since it was difficult to combine it with the day-to-day work of his office. Based on a suggestion from the advisory group, it was decided to appoint Ann-Christine Haupt as project leader in a half-time position from October 2001 to May 2002.

The advisory group arranged a seminar in Pajala in Norrbotten in February 2003, in connection with the Sámi Parliament's plenary meeting. The study itself was presented in complete form to the Sámi Parliament's Executive Council at the beginning of March 2003, where the Council accepted the whole

thing as presented, and finally sent it to the plenary meeting of the Sámi Parliament at the beginning of June 2003, when the study was also accepted in full.

The Sámi Parliament has this day, June 5th 2003, Resolution 28, resolved:

That it shall accept the Library Plan for the Sámi in Sweden in full as appended to this resolution,

That the library services of the Sámi Parliament be declared a regular undertaking of the Parliament and be included within its budget,

That the Executive Council be required to work together with the Cultural Council to investigate the prerequisites and make a proposal for the establishment of a Library Executive Board or its equivalent.

In connection with this same plenary meeting, the Executive Council also enacted a number of other measures that were proposed by the Library Commission in the presentation of the study:

The Leader of the Commission and the advisory group propose that certain measures be enacted and completed already in 2003. These are:

- 1. The establishment of a Library Executive Board whose members are appointed by the Executive Council of the Sámi Council.
Under the leadership of the Library Board the following activities should be commenced in the course of 2003:**
 - a. To develop a plan of operations for 2004-2006, including a budget, building on the overall mission of the Sámi Parliament and the Sámi Library Plan.**
 - b. To initiate collaboration with the commissions that the Sámi Parliament and the Swedish government have created regarding information strategies for the Sámi and implement the Library Plan within these.**
 - c. To initiate a preliminary study of Sámi publication activities in Sweden.**
- 2. Collaboration with Ájtte [the main Sámi cultural museum]:**
 - a. The Sámi Library Consultant's office shall be moved to Ájtte by September 2003.**
 - b. The libraries of the Sámi Parliament and Ájtte shall develop a plan for coordination of their services.**

The Library Plan affirms that the purpose of the plan is to:

Assure access by the Sámi people to reading, information, education and recreation, as well as to reinforce the identity, language, culture and research of the Sámi people.

The Library Plan shall also contribute to increasing an understanding of the Sámi people and their culture from a Sámi perspective.

The Plan proposes to focus on three centers: Kiruna, Jokkmokk, and Östersund, where the libraries also will be attached to specific Sámi institutions. In Kiruna, the library will be attached to the Sámi

government offices and the future parliament building. In Jokkmokk, the library will be part of Ájtte, the Swedish mountain and Sámi museum, while the third library will be associated with the South Sámi cultural center Gaaltje in Östersund. The plan is to have the system function as one library in a network, thus making use of the new information technology and the internet, as intended by the mandate to the commission. A parliamentary and government library will be developed in Kiruna where it will be possible to organize a virtual library with an extensive intranet for the personnel and elected members of the Sámi parliament. Here it will also be possible to provide the politicians of the Sámi parliament with an information service to support their parliamentary work. The existing collection at Ájtte will form the basis of the Jokkmokk library, as well as developing a service that will collaborate with research activities on the Sámi and Sámi affairs both in Sweden and abroad. This is where the existing work with a Sámi bibliography will be further developed, and in addition acquisitions and cataloging activities will be concentrated here. An open library and knowledge center will be initiated from Jokkmokk. The first stage will involve the development of a center for Sámi culture at the newly constructed Ája house at Ájtte, where the overall responsibility for the Sámi cultural buses and bookmobiles will also be located. A future goal will be to build up a library and knowledge center for the South Sámi culture to be attached to the South Sámi Cultural Center Gaaltje in Östersund.

Bookmobile services will be administered in collaboration with the Sámi parliament in Norway. Currently, there is a bookmobile cooperative operating in Västerbotten in South Sámi territory. Jokkmokk commune is in the midst of a Lule Sámi bookmobile project in cooperation with Tysfjord commune in Norway.

The Library Plan also makes provision for library consultation as an important aspect of library activities, and it is therefore proposed to create a position as consultant for children's librarianship.

Regarding personnel resources, the commission has established that Sámi library activities in Sweden include the following: one Sámi library consultant, one bibliographer who has been employed at Ájtte for the past 1 ½ years for retrospective cataloging, and one research librarian salaried by Ájtte. For future development in Sámi library services, the commission proposes two stages be prioritized. During the first stage, the following services and activities should be established:

- A Sámi bibliographer/cataloger
- A Sámi parliamentary librarian
- A librarian for the development of the library and knowledge center for North Sámi culture
- A children's library consultant
- Measures for the promotion of literacy for various age groups
- Book publishing for children and young adults

The second and final stage would then add the following, according to the commission:

- A librarian for the development of the library and knowledge center at Gaaltje for South Sámi culture
- A literature consultant
- A research librarian
- An education consultant

The mandate stipulated that the commission should examine possible avenues for financing. Here, the advisory group was unanimous that the only means of funding could be through government appropriations. In its 2004-2006 budget application to the Swedish government under the rubric Sámi Library Activities, the Sámi parliament has requested 4.9 million Swedish kronor for new services. By 2010 it is estimated that the Sámi Library will cost about 8 million Swedish kronor. The plan is for activities to be fully developed by 2015, at a cost of 21 million Swedish kronor.

The commission proposes that prime responsibility for Sámi library and information services should be laid under the Sámi parliament, and that the Sámi Library would be responsible for the Sámi parliament's information services in cooperation with the parliament. In addition, the Sámi Library will function as parliamentary and government library for the administration and organization of the parliament's activities.

Finally, the commission proposes that the Sámi Library be administered by an executive board appointed by the Sámi parliament. Members of the executive board will be representatives of the libraries and politicians affected by these developments. The Sámi Library will be located in Kiruna and Jokkmokk, and at a later date also in Östersund, and will be led by one overall executive officer.

According to the commission's mandate, the study was also to investigate the need for a central Sámi library and a general library plan for the Sámi in Sweden. The library consultant therefore developed two surveys in cooperation with the advisory group. One survey was directed to public libraries in the northernmost provinces and the other to 200 randomly selected members of the Sámi voting register. The results of these surveys were published in appendices to the report of the commission.

The library survey showed us a picture of libraries that

- Have acceptable knowledge about the Sámi and Sámi affairs
- Can provide their patrons with satisfactory information about the Sámi
- Lack knowledge of the Sámi languages
- Lack an overview of what has been published in the Sámi languages or about the Sámi people
- Lack well-developed routines for the acquisition of literature in the Sámi languages
- Do not acquire the majority of literature published in the Sámi languages
- Have developed their activities based on current actual demand for services, but
- Do have the willingness to educate their personnel and expand their activities

As far as the survey of the 200 randomly selected Sámi voters is concerned, it is possible to draw the following conclusions:

The Sámi voting register that was used to select the names included close to 7,000 people, so that if all 200 had replied, it would only number about 3% of the total. As it turned out, 68 replied, which is

equivalent to about 1% of all registered Sámi voters. That obviously means that the basis is too low to be able to have any representative answers to the questions that were put. However, we can understand that there nevertheless are some tendencies that come through. One result that can be deduced from the survey is that there are very many Sámi who cannot read the Sámi languages. 75% of the respondents must be said to be a very large number. It is also clear that efforts really need to be initiated to preserve the Sámi languages, and a part of these efforts must be endeavors to develop Sámi literature. Furthermore, we clearly need extensive linguistic surveys to determine the extent of the Sámi people's knowledge of the Sámi languages. The statistics we have now are quite old and may also be inaccurate.

Sámi people also do not have very many books in their homes, which could be explained by the fact that there are not so many books to go around, and certainly not that many in the linguistic group that one might belong to.

Going to the library to check out books is also not very prevalent. The comments say that people cannot read the Sámi languages, after all, but also that they suspect that librarians are not competent to advise us, since they certainly can't read Sámi. Some reported that they looked for Sámi books in other places, such as the Sámi League, or family or friends, bookstores, etc.

There were not many who were interested in going to the Sámi League's meeting places or Sámi Centers to look for literature. On the other hand, those who were interested were that much more enthusiastic about it; the differences here are social: it was possible to meet other Sámi there.

From the individual responses it is possible to deduce that the range of books that is available in the Sámi languages is mediocre, and there is a need for a considerably broader choice. Then perhaps the languages have a chance to survive or candidly even to develop.

What will happen in the future with the library development plan? First of all, the measures for 2003 enacted by the Sámi parliament in June are being put into place. The Library Consultant's office was relocated to Ájtte in August. The depository library's collection will be integrated with the Ája library, although the books will still be found in separate catalogs. The Sámi parliament books will be marked with the logo of the Sámi parliament. A plan for the coordination of library activities of Ájtte and the Sámi parliament is under development, along with a plan for the Sámi parliament's library services to 2006.

The chair of the Sámi cultural council has been in contact with me and encouraged me to write a memorandum to the Sámi cultural council with a proposal for what the Library Board might look like as far as numbers and makeup are concerned. A proposal for the board's areas of responsibility is also expected to be included in this memorandum.

Collaboration with the commissions of inquiry ordered by the Swedish government and the Sámi parliament regarding information priorities of concern to the Sámi people is now being intensified, and attempts to get a preliminary study or a full inquiry into Sámi publication activities in Sweden have been initiated.

As far as contacts with the central Swedish authorities are concerned, it is now up to the executive council of the Sámi parliament to take the initiative. The Sámi Library Consultant will naturally be prepared to actively provide any petitions that may be necessary to support their activities.

Translated by the Editor.

July 29, 2004